

# Parenting Effects on Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem in Late Adolescence and How Those Factors Impact Adjustment to College

Gregory J. Smith

Dickinson College

*Abstract:* Approximately three months before starting college, 203 high school seniors completed a questionnaire assessing self-efficacy, self-esteem, and their parents' parenting styles. Two weeks after starting college the students completed a questionnaire assessing homesickness and adjustment to college. Authoritarian parents had children with lower self-esteem and self-efficacy, while authoritative parents had children with higher self-esteem and self-efficacy. Students higher in self-esteem and self-efficacy experienced less homesickness and showed better emotional and behavioral adjustment to college.

The present research was completed to determine two things: 1) whether or not parenting styles have an impact on the development of self-esteem and self-efficacy in late adolescence, and 2) if there is some impact of parenting styles, do the resultant differences in self-esteem and self-efficacy affect experiences of homesickness and the adjustment to college in first-year college students?

The present research utilized the three parenting styles originally proposed by Baumrind (1971): authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parents are parents who are both demanding and emotionally responsive, assertive, but not intrusive or restrictive; authoritarian parents are parents who are highly demanding and directive, but not emotionally responsive, they set rules and expect them to be followed without exception; and permissive parents are parents who set few rules and demand little of their children. While modifications to Baumrind's original parenting styles have been proposed (e.g., Maccoby & Martin, 1983), the original three parenting styles continue to be used in research settings investigating the impact of parenting on a variety of characteristics in children and were of interest in the present research.

Because of the supportive nature of authoritative parenting, it was predicted that students whose parents were rated higher in authoritative parenting, showing support while maintaining high expectations, would exhibit higher self-esteem and self-efficacy. On the other hand, because of the lack of support and restrictive nature of authoritarian parenting, it was predicted that students whose parents were higher in authoritarian parenting would have lower self-esteem and self-efficacy. Lastly,

because permissive parents often show support, yet set few limits, it was predicted that students whose parents were higher in permissive parenting would have higher self-esteem, higher social self-efficacy, but lower general self-efficacy.

Having predicted that there would be the differences in self-esteem and self-efficacy related to parenting styles, it was also predicted that students higher in self-esteem, general self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy would have an easier time adjusting to college and would experience less homesickness.

## Method

Approximately three months prior to starting college 203 high school seniors (62 males, 141 females) completed a questionnaire consisting of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Sherer, et. al., 1982), and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) (Buri, 1991). The GSES provided scores on social self-efficacy and general self-efficacy, plus three subscales of general self-efficacy: initiative, effort, and persistence. The PAQ provided a measure of the extent to which each student's parents exhibited characteristics consistent with Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles. These measures were given three months before starting college to avoid any conflict between the assessment of these measures and the stresses of starting college.

Approximately two weeks after starting college, 161 of the above students (50 males, 111 females) completed a questionnaire consisting of the Tests of Reactions and Adaptations to College, English version (TRAC) (Larose & Roy, 1995) and the

Dundee Relocation Inventory (DRI) (Fisher, 1989), a measure of homesickness. These measures were given at the end of the second week of college in order to measure more lasting adjustment difficulties and to avoid transient adjustment problems and homesickness that may be more prevalent the first few days of college.

### Results

Looking first at parenting styles and the impact on self-esteem and self-efficacy, as expected fathers with higher authoritative scores tended to have children with higher self-esteem,  $r(185) = .43, p = .001$ , higher general self-efficacy,  $r(185) = .41, p = .001$ , higher scores on all three subscales of general self-efficacy (initiative, effort, and persistence, and higher in social self-efficacy,  $r(185) = .25, p = .001$ . Similarly, mothers with higher authoritative scores tended to have children with higher self-esteem,  $r(193) = .19, p = .01$ , higher general self-efficacy,  $r(193) = .23, p = .001$ , higher scores on the initiative and persistence subscales of general self-efficacy, and higher in social self-efficacy,  $r(193) = .13, p = .05$ .

As predicted, fathers with higher authoritarian scores tended to have children with lower self-esteem,  $r(185) = -.20, p = .01$ , lower general self-efficacy,  $r(185) = -.17, p = .02$ , and who were lower on all three subscales of general self-efficacy: initiative, effort, and persistence. Similarly, mothers with higher authoritarian scores also tended to have children with lower self-esteem,  $r(193) = -.18, p = .02$ , and who were lower on two of the subscales of general self-efficacy, initiative and persistence, but not overall general self-efficacy. Social self-efficacy was not related the authoritarian scores of either the father or mother.

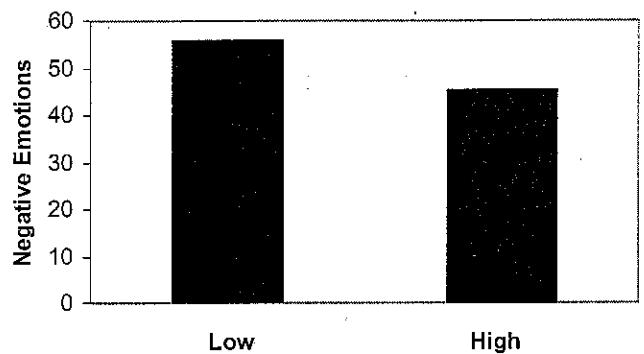
There was no relationship between permissiveness in either fathers or mothers and self-esteem, general self-efficacy, any of the subscales of general self-efficacy, or social self-efficacy.

To assess the impact of self-efficacy and self-esteem on adjustment to college and homesickness, participants were divided into high and low self-

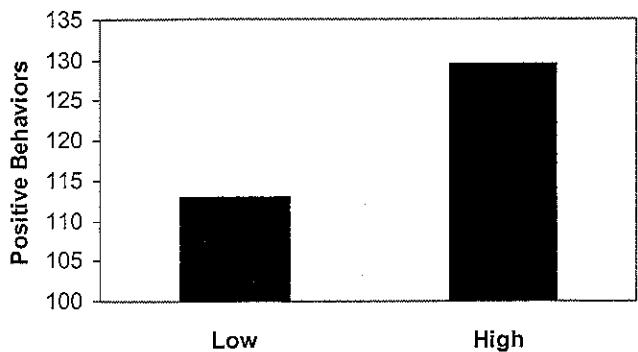
efficacy and self-esteem groups at the median. Then, on the TRAC the emotional domain subscales of fear of failure and examination anxiety were combined to yield an emotional adjustment score and the behavioral domain subscales of examination preparation, quality of attention, seeking assistance from peers, seeking assistance from teachers, and giving priority to college studies were combined to yield a behavioral adjustment score.

As predicted, general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy both had significant impacts on emotional and behavioral adjustment to college. Students higher in general self-efficacy experienced fewer emotional problems than those lower in general self-efficacy (see Figure 1) and also had better behavioral adjustment to college than those lower in general self-efficacy (see Figure 2). Similar results were found for all three subscales of the general self-efficacy scale.

Fig. 1: General Self-Efficacy Impact on Emotional Adjustment

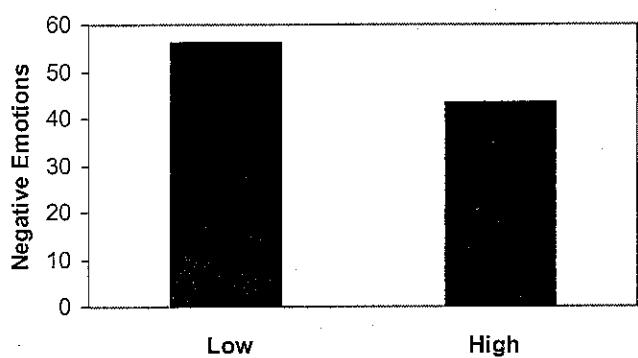


**Fig. 2: General Self-Efficacy Impact on Behavioral Adjustment**

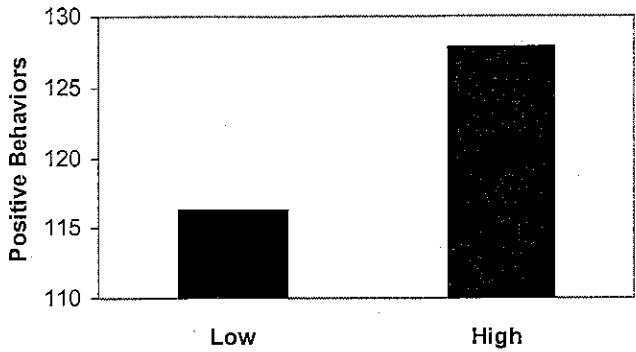


Students higher in social self-efficacy experienced fewer emotional problems than those lower in social self-efficacy (see Figure 3) and also had better behavioral adjustment to college than those lower in social self-efficacy (see Figure 4).

**Fig. 3: Social Self-Efficacy Impact on Emotional Adjustment**



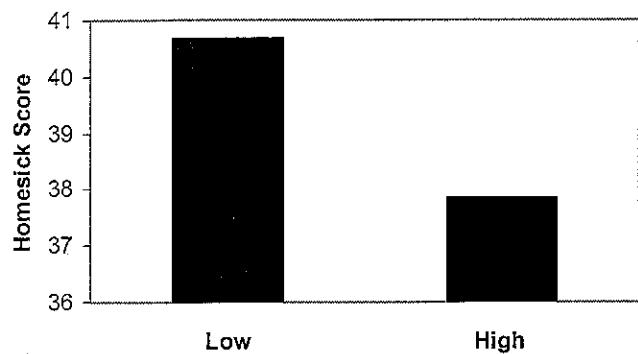
**Fig. 4: Social Self-Efficacy Impact on Behavioral Adjustment**



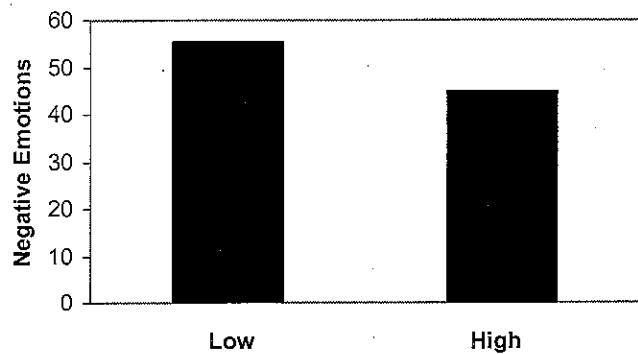
There were no differences in homesickness between students related to general self-efficacy. However, two subscales of that measure did show significant differences. Students high in effort experienced less homesickness ( $M = 37.72$ ,  $SD = 7.53$ ) than those low in effort ( $M = 41.12$ ,  $SD = 7.45$ ),  $t(107) = 2.36$ ,  $p = .01$ . Students high in persistence also experienced less homesickness ( $M = 38.02$ ,  $SD = 7.18$ ) than those low in persistence ( $M = 40.58$ ,  $SD = 7.94$ ),  $t(107) = 1.75$ ,  $p = .04$ . Social self-efficacy did not impact the experience of homesickness.

Students lower in self-esteem experienced more homesickness than those higher in self-esteem (see Figure 5). Students lower in self-esteem also experienced more emotional problems than those higher in self-esteem (see Figure 6). There were no differences between those high and low in self-esteem on behavioral adjustment to college.

**Fig. 5: Self-Esteem Impact on Homesickness**



**Fig. 6: Self-Esteem Impact on Emotional Adjustment**



### Discussion

The above results suggest that different parenting styles do impact self-efficacy and self-esteem in later adolescence. That is an important finding in and of itself because it shows the lasting effects of different parenting styles. Perhaps more importantly, the finding that self-efficacy and self-esteem impact initial adjustment to college and experiences of homesickness suggests that different parenting styles may play a role in students' adaptation to college.

In considering the role of self-efficacy and self-esteem as they affect adaptation to college and the experience of homesickness, it may be that the characteristics and skills that comprise self-efficacy

and self-esteem (i.e., initiative, effort, persistence, social adaptability, and feelings of self-worth) are important for adapting to new environments and tasks.

Currently research is underway to determine whether or not the effects noted two weeks into the semester persist into the second semester of college. It is predicted that the effects will persist and that students with increased levels of homesickness, more emotional difficulties, and fewer positive behaviors will continue to experience difficulty in college.

### References

Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology, Monographs*, 4.

Buri, J. R. (1991). Parental authority questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 57, 110-119.

Larose, S., & Roy, R. (1995). Test of reactions and adaptations in college (TRAC): A new measure of learning propensity for college. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 87, 293-306.

Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1981). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.). *Handbook of child psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. 4). New York: Wiley.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sherer, M., Maddux, J. E., Mercadante, B., Prentice-Dunn, S., Jacobs, B., & Rogers, R. W. (1982). The self-efficacy scale: Construction and validation. *Psychological Reports*, 51, 663-671.

---

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the  
Eastern Psychological Association  
Philadelphia, PA, March 23 – 25, 2007.

Contact Information: Dr. Gregory J. Smith  
Dept. of Psychology  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013  
smithg@dickinson.edu